#### MEETING RECORD

**NAME OF GROUP:** PLANNING COMMISSION

**DATE, TIME AND** Wednesday, May 17, 2006, 1:00 p.m., City Council **PLACE OF MEETING:** Chambers, First Floor, County-City Building, 555 S. 10<sup>th</sup>

Street, Lincoln, Nebraska

**MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE:** Jon Carlson, Gene Carroll, Michael Cornelius,

Dick Esseks, Roger Larson and Lynn

Sunderman; Gerry Krieser, Mary Strand and

Tommy Taylor absent.

**OTHERS IN ATTENDANCE:** Marvin Krout, David Cary, Jean Walker and Michele

Abendroth of the Planning Department; Randy Hoskins, Public Works & Utilities; media and other interested

citizens.

STATED PURPOSE

OF MEETING:

Public Listening Forum on the update of the

**Lincoln-Lancaster Metropolitan Planning** 

Organization's 2030 Long Range Transportation

Plan

Chair Jon Carlson called the meeting to order.

Staff presentation:

Randy Hoskins of Public Works & Utilities provided an overview of the status of the update. The first step in the process was to change to a new modeling software to look at how the future volumes will be impacted by the changes happening over the next 30 years. The new model has been updated and tested under the current conditions and used to look at the impacts on the streets using the 2030 land use map. They then put together the "continuing growth base network". With that plan they put together what looked to be able to accommodate the growth as defined by the land use plan over the next 25 years. Once that was done, the Planning Commission was brought into the process and they have come up with eleven different alternatives. Those alternatives have been modeled, including a number of additional roadways that have been added into the plan and one-way streets that might allow us to carry more traffic on some of the internal streets as opposed to widening. We put those into the traffic model to see what that did as far as being able to handle the traffic in 2030, finding that there was not a whole lot of difference in any of the networks reviewed. The average trip time from those runs was that in 2030, the average travel time for a trip within the city would range between 13.5 and just over 14 minutes. Currently, the average trip time, based on the 2004 model, is just under 8 minutes, so that is something that people will need to keep in mind. Thus, as the years go by, we are going to see a fairly good increase in travel times.

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When we ran the model on all of the scenarios, we came up with the traffic volumes that would be expected. The purpose of that is to make sure that the number of lanes we are proposing will be sufficient to handle the kind of volume that will be on those streets in the future.

The task now before us is to narrow the scenarios down to one single network, which will be reviewed in much more depth and detail, including costs, how to pay for it, and a number of other issues. The goal is to select one alternative by the end of this month.

Carlson asked Hoskins to talk briefly about the public process to this point. Hoskins advised that the process was started with a series of six open houses in which the public was encouraged to provide input on what they would like to see included in the new plan, i.e. improved streets, transit, airports, pedestrian and bicycle facilities, etc. More recently, the eleven different alternative networks were taken to an open house where feedback from the community was encouraged. This public forum is another portion of that public input process

Carlson noted that the 2030 population projection is 350,000 to 360,000. In terms of starting to be a bigger city, where does Lincoln rank when compared to other cities of that size in terms of travel time? Hoskins does not believe Lincoln would be out of line with cities of that size being within the 13-14 minutes. Right now, Lincoln has a very low travel time for the size of city that it is. It will obviously become more difficult to maintain that as additional traffic is placed on our streets. It is not necessarily a really long time but a mind-set that the community needs to recognize. It will not be a jump from 8 to 14 minutes immediately. It will be gradual.

Esseks inquired of Hoskins as to what he believes the major issues are going to be in making this decision. Hoskins noted that at this point, we are primarily talking streets. Obviously, some of the major issues we have heard from the community include whether or not to widen the existing internal arterial streets. At this point we have determined that we will not be widening those streets. One-way streets are also an issue. That is a way to carry more traffic, but it also creates some problems with longer travel distances being involved and sometimes it impacts neighborhoods with traffic cutting through neighborhoods. Probably one of the big areas of concern is funding for these streets. One of the things we looked at with the continuing growth based network was to scale it back to make it more fiscally constrained. That is something that is going to have to be considered throughout this whole process.

Esseks asked Hoskins whether he would consider the issue of which of the new area streets should be four lanes versus two to be a big decision. Hoskins' response was

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that it depends somewhat on where the growth and development is going to occur. If we continue a pattern where we are trying to grow in all directions, then we are probably not going to need those wide streets in one area. If we are looking at growth in just one direction, then we are going to need to build those streets out more heavily up front and plan for that. The cost differential between four-lane and two-lane when built initially is only about one million dollars. It costs \$3.2 million per mile to build two-lane, and \$4.2 million per mile to build four-lane, so we need to look at that. If an area is going to need that four-lane road early, we can save a lot of money by building it up front. It is more expensive to add the two lanes later. We are trying to work with the County to get those roads out around the edge -- instead of building down the middle of the right-of-way – but offset them to come back in and add the other two lanes in the future.

Larson inquired whether RUTS is being used only on roadways outside the city. Hoskins indicated that RUTS is being used on roads that are inside the city limits in areas where we do not currently have roadways. We are using that concept of building two lanes off-set.

### **Public Comments**

1. Clay Buell, 641 S. 13<sup>th</sup> Street, indicated that he has attended some of the open houses and attended the StarTran open house as well. How much is the city going to embrace some context sensitive guidelines for road improvements? He believes that there have been some discussions and some studies done within the past year that would expand definitions of various types of thoroughfares and arterial streets to make them more context sensitive and more pedestrian friendly. He is concerned about the inner parts of the city. There needs to be an appreciation for some of these new categories of what constitutes a good thoroughfare, not only from a vehicular point of view but from the pedestrian or bicyclist point of view. He believes that the Congress for New Urbanism has done some study on this issue, and there have been some other publications on this issue as well.

Esseks asked whether Buell had any particular parts of the city in mind. Buell stated that he is particularly interested in 13<sup>th</sup> Street just because he lives close by and he believes the street warrants such attention because it has a fair amount of traffic on it now. It is a link between Downtown and the South Street redevelopment. It is a key street that he believes could perhaps be a pilot project for a context sensitive street design to not only carry traffic but to assist in redeveloping those two neighborhoods or to facilitate growth in that area.

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2. Jan Jensen, 4800 A Street, has been involved in street planning for a long, long time. She believes that the general thrust of what is being planned is a pretty good one. We are very fortunate to have the arterial grid which was established by our founding fathers back in the 1800's, with the arterials about 8 blocks apart, both east/west and north/south. It is easy to find addresses and the traffic can distribute itself across those different arterials, and it makes it easy to plan for new development because those streets can be extended. It is important to make sure thatthose streets are clear with no major geographical barriers being put across those arterial streets. It is important for the internal streets that we maintain that balance; that we don't make some streets get heavier traffic than others and try to keep it so that we have alternative streets for travel. It is important to hold onto that grid.

Jensen also suggested that we work harder on getting some internal ring roads. We have some good streets going east/west and north/south but we do not have them well connected. At the moment, we do not have good corners or good connections and she would suggest that we try to think about making that connection.

In addition, Jensen trusts that the Planning Commission will do away with the one-way street recommendation. Eight blocks between one-way streets is not practical and is potentially dangerous. We need to have all of those streets operating in both directions.

There were no other public comments.

Hoskins stated that he will be meeting with the Planning Commission next Wednesday, May 24, 2006, at 12:00 Noon, to continue to review these alternatives. On May 31, 2006, beginning at 12:00 Noon, he will be working with the Planning Commission to narrow to one alternative.

Esseks believes it is going to be difficult to decide among these alternatives since the overall predicted average trip times are so close. Are you able to offer us some other decision criteria? Hoskins stated that Public Works has done a cost benefit analysis for each of the networks. There are not huge differences, but the cost benefit analysis does offer another means for reviewing the alternatives.

Esseks inquired whether there are any signature routes, such as routes to Downtown or routes to hospitals? Is there some way of breaking this into really important groups and maybe one or more of the options will pop out as being superior on those grounds? Hoskins indicated that the staff had considered creating some of the better internal ring roads, i.e. whether or not to look at actual travel times from certain places to certain

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places. The staff had kind of decided against it, but he agreed that they could attempt to put something together along those lines. One of the concerns that staff had is while that may help or lead to improvements for a certain area of town, does that tell us what's happening in other areas?

Esseks expressed concern about being able to decide among the options. Hoskins does not know that it is a science – it's probably more of an art. He will attempt to have some additional information on May 24<sup>th</sup>. Even though we are trying to get this to one alternative street network, that does not have to be the final end-all. We will still have some options. We do have more public meetings scheduled so we are not closing the door on anything at this point; however, we do need to get it down to a reasonable alternative in order to do a lot more analysis.

Carlson suggested that the Planning Commission becomes the public's instrument, using the Comprehensive Plan as the guideline and the feedback from the community to eliminate some of those options.

Esseks commented that unless there is some good analysis to address those questions, he is afraid the Commission will be "flying by the seat of their pants".

Hoskins will provide the cost benefit analysis information prior to the next meeting.

There being no further testimony or questions, the meeting was adjourned at 1:35 p.m.

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